
⚡ W1TKZ ⚡ The Spark Gap

December 1989

Official Journal of the Wellesley Amateur Radio Society

President's Message

by Tom Kinahan, N1CPE

I would like to extend holiday best wishes to everyone, and to cite some of our accomplishments this year.

We began the year with a Novice class led by Frank, NG1I, and Roger, N1EYZ — a class which was successful in its own right and which brought us at least a dozen new members.

Throughout the spring (as throughout the year), at our meetings, we enjoyed the fine speakers recruited by Kathy, K1IYR, and Rita, N1DDI.

The repeater was working unusually well at this time, with members reporting unheard of in recent years.

Our busy month — June — came loaded with activities, and we mourned the passing of Paul Monroe, K1LDV, at Mount Equinox. We had to forego the VHF contest, but we did sponsor a plaque in the single-op category.

Field day came and our 8A operation was better and more enthusiastic than ever, highlighted by NY1J's balloon antenna and Dick Seeg's photography.

During the summer, we learned that our club home, the Wellesley Red Cross chapter house, was to be put up for sale. We are still looking for a new home in Wellesley.

Fall brought the usual onslaught of hurricanes to parts of the country, and WARS teamed up with other Eastern Massachusetts hams, the Red Cross, and the Commonwealth, to produce another health-and-welfare inquiry center for victims of hurricane Hugo. This time, I think the state

officials and the Red Cross got a clear view of what amateur radio can do in an emergency.

In the November Sweepstakes, we used computer logging for the first time at W1TKZ, and racked up 135 QSOs. (All right, we didn't set the world on fire.)

As of this writing we just finished our annual Christmas/holiday party, hosted by Vern (ND1Z) and Liz (N1FUP) Valero. About twenty members and guests came, and enjoyed unsurpassed food, drink, and merriment.

No doubt I have forgotten something, but our club has become so active, it is becoming difficult to keep track of everything. You, the members of the Society, can take pride in the achievements of another fine year. Thanks to your motivation and enthusiasm, we can all be proud to belong to the finest amateur radio club in New England.

Please accept my best wishes for a joyous holiday season.



Meetings

All meetings are on Thursdays at
7:30 p.m.

December 21

January 4

January 18

February 1

211 Washington Street, Wellesley

New Members

The Society welcomes four new members since last month's **Spark Gap**:

Bruce Barrett	(no call yet)
Nelson Gifford	(no call yet)
Carl Gundel	(no call yet)
Brad Thornton	N1GXI

If every member last year rejoins this year, we will have 117 members, another record.

Last call for dues

If you have not paid your dues for this year, civilized life as we know it will come to an end for you at the end of this month: **The Spark Gap** will stop arriving in your mailbox, the second and third Thursday evenings of each month will hang heavy on your calendar, and you will no longer be a part of the growth and prosperity of our club.

Officers

President:

Tom Kinahan, N1CPE 508/ 877-3456

Vice President:

Vern Valero, ND1Z 508/ 533-6822

Treasurer:

C. J. McDonald, WB1BUM
617/ 332-6091

Recording Secretary:

Dave Bush, KC1PR 617/ 944-7025

Corresponding Secretary:

Kathy Pate, KA1IYR 508/ 785-1801

Fundraising Chairman:

Jerry Driscoll, NV1T 617/444-2686

Operations Chairman:

Denis Guillemette, NY1J
617/739-5170

Seventeen dollars in the hands of Mr. McDonald would banish this nightmare.

Exam session

The most recent of the quarterly examination sessions sponsored by the Society was held at the Red Cross chapter house on December 9. Twenty-four candidates sat for various FCC examinations, of whom twenty passed at least one part. The following persons upgraded their license classes (WARS members in bold type):

To Technician

Bruce Barrett	no call
Barry Glassman	KA1FXT
Carl Gundel	no call
Maureen O'Gorman	KA1URW

To General

Charles Foundyller	KA1UQZ
Ed Honour, Jr.	KA1RZQ
Ken Des Ruisseau	KA1TPE

To Advanced

Carl Carter	N1HBV
Paul Marciello	KA1SRI
Scott Sminkey	N1GJQ
Brad Thornton	N1GXI

To Extra

Joe Green	K2VUI
Rick Lewis	KC1QN

The following passed one or more parts without upgrading:

Barb Aldridge	no call
Bill Bailey	KA1TTL
Warren Brewster	KA1KHS
Leon Kaufman	N1EZB
Bruce Pigott	KA1TOW
Dave Segalini	no call
Charlie Stevens	KA1DHV

Vern Valero, ND1Z, led the team of volunteer examiners, which included Tom N1CPE, Thomas KX1H, Tim N1FME, Barry WA1YDL, Don NT1L, and Art NT1M.

The Spark Gap
Official Journal of the Wellesley
Amateur Radio Society

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The Spark Gap is published monthly, except July and August, by the Wellesley Amateur Radio Society. The text of **The Spark Gap** is prepared by the editor, using Xywrite wordprocessing software on an IBM PC XT. It is then sent by modem to Don Mauch of Duxbury, where final proofs are produced from a Macintosh conversion using Pagemaker on a Mac SE.

The Society hereby grants permission for reprinting any articles from **The Spark Gap**, provided only that the author and this newspaper are credited.

The Society's purpose is to encourage participation in amateur radio. Membership is open to all radio amateurs; dues are \$17 per year (September through August). Meetings of the Society are held on the first and third Thursdays of each month. The Society conducts classes for those intending to take FCC license examinations, and examination sessions four times a year. For more information please write to the editor, or to the Society:

The Wellesley Amateur Radio Society
211 Washington Street
Wellesley, Massachusetts 02181

Fundraising Opportunity?

The Spark Gap received the following letter from Sandra Teare of GTE Laboratories, Inc., addressed to the Society:

"GTE Laboratories would like to offer your organization an opportunity for a mini-fundraiser. My group at GTE laboratories develops and evaluates new customer services and products. We are always looking for

people to help us in this process. We will donate \$15 directly to your organization for each person in your organization who is willing to come to GTE and participate in a product trial.

"Your organization would be responsible for collecting a list of members who are interested in participating in our research, along with their phone numbers. We would contact each member by phone to set up an appointment. We would then tally the number of members from your organization who came in over the course of a month (or some other appropriate time period) and pay your organization directly for their time.

"Participating in our research would require only about an hour from each interested member and would be scheduled at their convenience. We think this mini-fundraiser would be both an easy and interesting way for your organization to raise some extra money.

"Please contact me at [617/ 466-2760] if you have any questions."

WARS Homebrewing Group

by Art Anderson, NT1M

The group met for the first time on December 7. Present were Scott N1GJQ, Art NT1M, Jerry NV1T, Denis NY1J, and John W1UQC; Harry W1LMU was unable to attend but will be a member. I reported on my research of kit availability, and Scott talked about tools and procedures.

We are each going to order a kit of parts for the "QRP Three-Bander" transceiver from Radiokit; and equip ourselves with proper soldering irons, etc. We decided to delay plans for building a keyer into the rig until we saw the size of the PC board and enclosure.

We shall meet again in January and set up a regular schedule of future meetings. Anyone may join us by ordering the kit (see *QST* for October) and joining us then. This is a group for beginners, and persons intimidated by the prospect of building a radio from scratch, so if you are strictly an "appliance operator" and want support while you

shed your fear of equipment, now is the time, and this is the place.

Algonquin Flea Market

The Algonquin Amateur Radio Club will hold their flea market at the Marlborough Middle School on Saturday, February 17. Doors open at 8:00am for dealers, 10:00am for the public. Tables are \$10 if reserved in advance (\$12 at the door); general admission is \$2. Talk-in is on 146.61 MHz. For more information, call or write:

Algonquin Amateur Radio Club
PO Box 258
Marlborough, MA 01752
508/ 481-4988

Serious QSLing

by Art Anderson, NT1M

By serious QSLing, I mean the kind you do when you are setting out to gather QSL cards for an award such as DXCC. This is distinguished from the indifferent sort of QSLing you might do in the case of a casual QSO with a stateside amateur. In the latter case, you might not care whether the other station sent you a card or not; in the former, you seriously intend to get a card in return.

When I first became a ham, in May of 1988, I somehow had acquired the notion that it was only proper to send a card for *every* QSO in one's log; so that is what I have done, assuming that most other hams would do likewise. I was wrong. I have not gotten cards from any but a small minority of American hams (who have only to spend 15 cents postage); and from foreign hams, an even smaller minority (and they can use the QSL bureau, at practically no cost). The only way to get a card, practically speaking, is to send not only a self-addressed envelope (SAE) but also postage. We could waste a lot of time decrying the loss of courtesy among hams, but that would not alter the truth: if you want the card, send SAE and postage — period.

After getting very poor response from my nonaggressive QSL practices, I started to get serious about a year ago — and went from 33

confirmed countries in January of 1989 to 109 in December. In what follows, I shall tell you how I go about QSLing, and what I have learned about it — not so much to toot my own horn, but to give you the benefit of my experience. Certainly, my methods are not the only way to be successful, but they have worked well for me.

I believe that it is impossible to get the QSL cards you need solely by using the QSL bureau: in fact, many DX stations now announce that they will respond only to direct QSLs. Therefore, I shall not discuss QSLing through the bureau, although it is possible to get many countries confirmed that way.

Your Card

If you are going for DXCC, you are going to be sending hundreds of cards, so you may as well have a large batch printed up — unless you know you are going to move, or change your call sign. The card should show clearly the following information:

- o Your **call sign**
- o Your **name**
- o The **QTH** from which the QSO took place (if you operate much portable or maritime mobile, you may wish to leave this to be filled in). Strictly speaking, QTH means latitude and longitude, but you may wish to show instead the Maidenhead grid locator, or just the street address.
- o Your return **address**
- o Call sign of the **other station**
- o **Date** of QSO — this should be the *UTC date* corresponding to the UTC, below. For example, if the UTC date of the contact is December 2, 1989, show the date as "02-DEC-89". Do not show it as "12/02/89", because, while to us Americans this means December 2, it means February 12 to most foreigners. The leading zero on the day should be shown, to avoid any confusion. (I have used the same 02-DEC-89 format in my log ever since I found *myself* getting confused using the all-numeric format.)

- o **Time of QSO** — UTC, not local time. For us on the east coast, UTC (coordinated universal time, as reported on WWV) is five hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and four hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time.
- o **Frequency** In MHz (show the frequency to three decimal places, e.g. "21.035 MHz", not "21 MHz". The reason for accuracy is that the DX station may be able to use that information to find you in their log, if, say, you inadvertently put down the wrong date or time.
- o **Mode** (e.g., CW, SSB, RTTY) *and* the words "two-way" or "2X", to indicate clearly that it was a two-way contact (and not, for example, an SWL contact). This is important because the DXCC desk requires that each contact credited have this information on the confirmation.
- o **Signal report** (e.g., "599" for CW, or "5-9" for SSB).

Your call sign should appear on the *same side* of the card as the QSO data. This means that if you have your call sign and QTH on one side of the card, as I do, and the QSO data on the other side, you should have a rubber stamp made up with just your call sign in large letters, and stamp the card on the side showing the QSO data. The reason for this is that in the typical case your card is being processed with thousands of others (as after a DXpedition): if the QSL manager has to turn over each card in order to find the contact in the DX station's log, it doubles or triples his workload. Your call-sign stamp will have other uses, which we shall get to, so is a good investment in any case.

The SAE

For these, I use standard, blank, white envelopes (letter-sized — 3.5" by 6.5") which I purchase in boxes of 100. It is true that some foreign cards will not fit inside this size, but most will, and I have had good luck with it. I also have a rubber stamp with my mailing address on it, which I use to make the envelope self-addressed. Be sure that your address stamp does *not* include your call sign, because you will want to use it also for putting your return address on the outside

envelope (about which more below), and, as we shall have occasion to say again and again: no call signs should appear on the outside envelope! Call signs indicate radio amateurs, who are known to send return postage in their envelopes, and greedy hands around the world are busy making such envelopes "disappear".

Use your call-sign stamp to put your call on the flap of the SAE. This is needed in case the other station separates your card from your SAE, and (as in my case) the address on your card does not match the address on your SAE. In the case of a large DXpedition, it is also useful to put the date and time of the contact on the flap, as some managers like to line up the envelopes before filling out their cards.

If you are sending your card to a US address, put a first-class postage stamp on your SAE, making it a SASE (self-addressed, stamped envelope). Otherwise, put a "green stamp" — a US\$1 bill — *inside the SAE, along with your card*. You want everything inside the SAE so that the aforementioned greedy persons cannot divine what is inside the cover envelope by holding it up to light. These persons will, if they see the green stamp inside, divert the green stamp to their pockets, and destroy the rest of the material as incriminating evidence.

Some writers advise the use of IRCs (international reply coupons) instead of green stamps; but IRCs cost about \$.95 at the post office, and you will need two or three of them to cover air-mail postage from most foreign countries, whereas \$1.00 will cover the postage just as well. Supposedly, it is illegal to send currency to some countries, but I have not heard of any DX stations who object. If you want to use IRCs, you can purchase them privately from other hams (for example W6GO, who publishes the QSL-manager list) for about \$.50 each. It turns out that hams are the largest users of IRCs, and that for the most part they are not used for postage, but have become a sort of international ham currency.

The Outer Envelope

For this, I use a 5" by 7.5" kraft envelope (the kind made of heavy brown paper), which I purchase in boxes of 100. In the upper left-

hand corner, use your address stamp to put a return address on the envelope. Fortunately, you did not put your call sign on the address stamp; because if you had, you would not use it on the outer envelope — because **you never put call signs, or any other indication that amateur radio is involved, on the outside envelope!** Address the envelope carefully in large printed letters, again avoiding call signs and the like, and showing the destination country clearly. If the package is going to a US address, send it first-class only (not air mail) because all domestic first-class mail is air mail by definition, and there is no need to overpay the postage. For foreign destinations, use international air mail only. At the time of writing, foreign air mail costs about \$.45, and will arrive in a few days (or a couple of weeks, in some eastern European countries); surface mail to overseas locations takes virtually forever.

Finally, note the date in your log, along with the number of green stamps sent, etc., so you will know how long you have been waiting. The return card may arrive in a week or two, in the case of an ordinary ham station, or may take several months, in the case of a DXpedition (because they do not print their cards until they have returned). I am told you should wait a year before following up, in case you hear nothing from the other station.

You will have noticed that serious QSLing is not cheap. But then DXing is not cheap in any sense, when you consider the cost of rig, antenna, publications, etc. Look at it this way: by the time you make the honor roll, you will have spent about \$300 in postage (an average of one green stamp per country) and perhaps \$100 in envelopes, rubber stamps, etc. Also by that time, you will have probably decided that you need a rotating antenna on a tower, which will set you back several thousand: the cost of QSLing will be the least of your worries!

Code Ode

by Troy Weidenheimer, W0ROF

It's more than dots and dashes,
It's a place.
A sanctuary for those who've learned

To love the mysterious magic of
Thoughts arriving in mile-long strings
On roads of ether or wire.

Even more, it's peace,
A shield from the disordered sounds
Of traffic, angry people,
And industrial clatter.
Within its warm mantle
We find soothing respite.

And the patter of bright ideas it is,
The sharp focusing of others' thoughts
From miles beyond our vision's range.
As in a dream we sit so still.
It floats in our ears and stirs our minds
With concern, remembrance, speculation,
And mirth.

And code is music,
From sounders and speakers it dances
In the shack to each sender's inner clock,
And comes butter smooth, deliciously
swinging,
Or choppy staccato from a "fist" praising
definition,
Or perfectly metered, flowing exquisitely
From the gentle hand of an artist.

A place,
And peace,
Intelligence, and
Music.
Code is more than dots and dashes.

DX News

by Art Anderson, NT1M



This month we received a letter from Bob Crockett, W1LF, who has had a bountiful November, having worked the following:

3D2ML	21016 kHz	2100z	Fiji
XT2KG	14002	2048	Burkina Faso
BY1QH	14004	0040	China
S9AGD/MM	21035	1650	Principe
LU1ZAK	14014	0056	So. Orkny
UM8MCG	14014	1309	Khrgyzia
4S7TP	14000	0105	Sri Lanka
YC3FFB	21001	1405	Indonesia
4S7EA	21007	0047	Sri Lanka
3C1EA	21004	1230	Eq. Guinea
ZD7KM	21000	2100	St. Helena

CE00GZ	14006	0050	Jupiter Is.
TT8DA	21008	2150	Chad

November was the first month since the late 1950s (solar cycle 19) in which the solar flux was above 200 for an entire calendar month. The *DX Magazine* reports that cycle 22 is still tracking cycle 19 closely, and will probably reach its peak next summer. It's a wonderful time for DXing.

The 1989 New England DX Convention and Dinner was a lively and interesting affair. We saw slide shows of DXpeditions to St. Pierre, Willis Island and Mellish Reef (in the Coral Sea), and Walvis Bay (Namibia). Don Greenbaum, WB2DND, gave an interesting account of his travels (supposedly on business) to the United Arab Emirates, and his helping A61AD get a ham license there. He also showed some slides of Dubai.

After a good dinner, Bill Shipp, KC1AG, told us about **Walvis Bay**. Shipp is on sabbatical from Brown University this year, and decided to devote himself to putting a new country on the air. He and his Namibian cohorts travelled to Walvis Bay, which is a South African enclave in Namibia, and set up their equipment in a small hotel. Their biggest problem was the presence of sand storms, which caused a fine grit to penetrate even the most well sealed rooms. One morning, Bill woke up with an inch of fine sand on his face! This grit got into their equipment and wreaked havoc.

Incidentally, Walvis Bay is not yet approved as a "country" by the DX Advisory Committee, and there is some question whether it will be: Namibia is expected to lay claim to the Bay because it is the only good deep-water port on the coast. Anyway, Bill says QSL cards will be ready soon, so if you worked ZS1IS in September you have not long to wait.

At the close of the meeting, our own Joe Green, K2VUI, was elected president for next year. The New England DX Convention has no dues or permanent structure, and only this one annual meeting. We look forward to next year.

One of the benefits of the meeting for yrobdtsvt was to straighten him out on the whirlwind of activity surrounding **Bouvet Island**. It turns out that

there are two groups heading for Bouvet. The first is the Norwegian Group, Club Bouvet, who will operate station 3Y5B (not 3Y0B, as reported here earlier) starting December 23, for about 23 days (14 days on the air). The second group, known as the Saturday Evening Post Society, had planned to operate 3Y0B from Bouvet in February; now, according to *The DX Bulletin*, they are making contingency plans to travel to alternative sites, such as South Sandwich or South Georgia, in case the Norwegians are successful.

In any case, keep your ears open starting December 23; as we said earlier, Bouvet was last on the air in 1979, so you may have a long wait if you miss it this time.

A team of Japanese will operate from **Vietnam** as 3W0JA, 05 December through 05 January, CW and SSB. Sunrise is at 2310z, sunset at 1030z. QSL to JA7JPZ.

Sivio F6EEM and Florence F6FYP will operate from the **Maldives** 12-17 January, CW and SSB. Sunrise is at 0120z, sunset at 1305z. QSL to the French DX Foundation, Box 88, Bruz, France.

JA2NQG and JA2SWJ will operate from the **Marianas** under the call AH0F in the CQWW 160-meter contest; they will be on all HF bands the day before and the day after the contest. QSL to JA2NQG.

Canada has authorized a new call-sign prefix for the province of **Prince Edward Island**: VY2. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick will continue to use the prefix VE1.

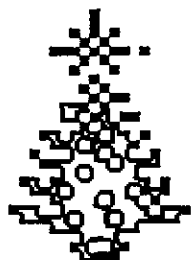
Finally, one of the few countries not worked by our colleague Roger, W1EOA, is **Bhutan**, the tiny kingdom in the Himalayas. Rumor has it that the king of Bhutan has re-authorized amateur radio there, and we may hear the prefix A5 again soon. Bhutan is number nine on the *DX Magazine's* survey of most needed countries; it has been off the air since 1982.

For Sale

Icom R70 receiver. Amateur bands through 30 MHz. \$300. Call Roger, W1EOA, at 235-6239.

Calendar

21 Dec WARS meeting
04 Jan WARS meeting
18 Jan WARS meeting
01 Feb WARS meeting
15 Feb WARS meeting
17 Feb Marlboro Flea Market



Next WARS Exam Session

To Be Announced

Call Vern, ND1Z 508/533-6822



The Spark Gap

**The Wellesley Amateur
Radio Society**

211 Washington Street
Wellesley, Massachusetts 02181

First Class Mail

Mr. Bill Hanlon, N1ADY
49 Vine Street
Wrentham, MA 02093